

## Program Overview – Sparks! Ignition Grants for Museums

The Sparks! Ignition Grants for Museums program is a special funding opportunity within the IMLS National Leadership Grants for Museums program, which supports projects that address problems, challenges, or needs of broad relevance to museums. These small grants encourage museums to prototype and evaluate specific innovations in the ways they operate and the services they provide resulting in new tools, products, services, or organizational practices. Applicants may propose activities or approaches that involve risk, as long as the project results – be they success, failure, or a combination thereof – offer valuable information to the museum field and the potential for improvement in the ways museums serve their communities.

To maximize the public benefit from federal investments in these grants, the Sparks! Ignition Grants for Museums program will fund only projects with the following characteristics:

- *Broad Impact:* Projects should show the potential for far-reaching impact beyond the applicant institution, and influence practice across one or more disciplines or specific fields within the museum profession.
- *In-depth Knowledge:* Projects should reflect a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter and an awareness and support of current strategic initiatives and agendas in the field.
- *Innovative Approach:* Projects should employ new approaches to strengthen and improve services to benefit the audiences and communities being served.
- *Shared Results:* Project should generate results that can be widely used, adapted, scaled, or replicated to leverage the benefits of federal investment. Grantees are required to submit a short white paper, or create their own dissemination tool, to be publicly posted and shared with the field.

Examples of activities that may be funded by this program include, but are not limited to the following:

- Rapid prototyping and testing of new ways to engage learners
- Offering innovative new types of services or new service options
- Exploring the potential of highly original, experimental collaborations
- Implementing new workflows or processes with potential for substantial cost savings
- Addressing community challenges through new types of partnerships, services, processes, or practices
- Developing and testing new tools or services that facilitate access, presentation, management, preservation, sharing, or use of museum collections